

Message Text

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65-60

ACTION EUR-12

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P R 221905Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2866

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2891

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: CUNHAL ON PCP-AFM RELATIONS

REF: LISBON 2861

SUMMARY: COMMUNIST LEADER CUNHAL IS BEGINNING TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR PARTY ACCEPTANCE OF DIRECT MILITARY RULE, WHILE WARNING THE AFM THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO NEED THE PCP. END SUMMARY.

1. DISCUSSING HIS PARTY'S POSITION ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS, PCP SECRETARY-GENERAL CUNHAL MADE THE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS DURING AN HOUR-LONG NATIONWIDE TV INTERVIEW MAY 21:

(A) HE IS APPREHENSIVE OVER THE SITUATION. QUERIED WHAT A FUTURE PORTUGAL WOULD LOOK LIKE, CUNHAL REPLIED: "TODAY WE HAVE A DIFFERENT ANSWER THAN WE WOULD HAVE GIVEN A WEEK OR TWO AGO."

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(B) PRESENT COALITION GOVERNMENT IS VIABLE TO THE

DEGREE THAT IT DOES NOT OPPOSE THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS. IT IF DOES, IT WOULD BECOME INVIALE AND LEAD TO "NEW AND GRAVE PROBLEMS."

(C) ASKED WHETHER INTER-PARTY STRUGGLES COULD LEAD TO A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP BEING ESTABLISHED IN PORTUGAL, CUNHAL REPLIED THAT IF IT WERE NECESSARY TO SEEK A MILITARY SOLUTION, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP. "A GOVERNMENT WHICH DISPENSES WITH PARTIES WOULD NOT SIGNIFY A DICTATORSHIP. THERE CAN BE A POLITICAL SYSTEM WITHOUT A COALITION OF PARTIES AND WITHOUT THERE BEING A DICTATORSHIP. I DON'T SEE THE AFM TURNING IN A DICTATORIAL DIRECTION, EVEN OF THE LEFT."

2. EARLIER, ON MAY 18, CUNHAL HAD CRITICIZED THE MILITARY FOR THEIR NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS ALL POLITICAL PARTIES, CLAIMING THAT IF THIS ATTITUDE TOOK CONCRETE FORM IT WOULD WEAKEN THE TIES BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES AND THE PEOPLE. HE ADDED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THOSE PARTIES WHICH PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS AND THOSE THAT OPPOSE IT.

3. COMMENT: CUNHAL'S "DIFFERENT ANSWER" INDEED SIGNIFIES A SHIFT IN THE PARTY'S TACTICS. HERETOFORE, THE PCP HAS STRESSED ITS FIDELITY BOTH TO THE AFM AND TO THE CIVILIAN FACADE REPRESENTED BY THE CABINET COALITION. NOW, HOWEVER, CUNHAL IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT A COMPLETE BREAK WITH THE SOCIALISTS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT MILITARY RULE -- PROVIDED THERE IS A ROLE FOR THE PCP. CUNHAL'S EMERGING LINE IS THAT AFM PLUS PCP EQUALS MILITARY GOVERNMENT; AFM MINUS PCP EQUALS MILITARY DICTATORSHIP.

4. AT THE SAME TIME THAT HE SEEKS TO TUCK THE PCP TIGHTER UNDER THE AFM'S EPAULETTES, CUNHAL ALSO WANTS TO IMPRESS UPON THE AFM THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO NEED THE PCP -- HENCE THE MAY 18 WARNING. THIS IS A DIFFICULT, AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS, MANEUVER FOR THE PCP. THE NORMALLY SUAVE CUNHAL WAS NOTICEABLY TAUT AND TENSE DURING HIS TV PERFORMANCE. CARLUCCI

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